

Contributions.

THE MORALS OF CALIFORNIA.

MARTIN SHIVELY.

I suppose there are comparatively few places in the world, which are more blessed with physical advantages than is California. Her climate is superb, her mineral wealth is great, her fruit is unsurpassed in the whole world, she is rich in agriculture, her atmospheric conditions are such as promote good health, her flowers are both beautiful and plentiful, and her commerce is large. Having all these advantages, it would seem that her people ought to be devoutly thankful to the Giver of all good, and that with gladness they would conform to the standard of morals which he prescribes. This is, however, not the case, and I am sorry to be unable to deliver so flattering a report along this line, as I can along many others. But I have set out to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" and I shall do so, to the best of my ability. No. I am bound to say that here is another instance

"Where every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."

Of course this is not to be construed to mean all the people; for if there are here the dissolute and indifferent, there are here also to be found as earnest, conscientious and consecrated a people as can be found anywhere. So far as numbers are concerned, however, they constitute a very small minority. There are perhaps few places in the world, which might not be much improved morally and spiritually, for sin is everywhere; but I have yet to find the place where it is more open, established and defiant than I find it here.

Since arriving at the years of understanding, and especially since I became a Christian, I have been fighting the devil along all lines, and especially as he shows himself in the American saloon. I did so, because I believed with my whole heart, that the entire business was an importation from hell, and that its prime result would be the taking back with it a host of men to whom God has offered better things, I saw that in the mean time, the whole course of its pathway was strewn with evil—with homes it had wrecked, prospects it had blasted, hopes it had crushed, and bitter scalding tears it had caused to be shed. I saw the prisons it had filled, the almshouses it had tenanted, the asylums it had caused to be occupied, and the blighted, ruined lives it was ending on the gallows. How could I but cry out against the horrible monster! In the east, I found it generally recognized as an institution with only evil tenden-

cies, and in most of the states, a heavy tax was imposed upon it, which is supposed by some to lessen the harm growing out of it. I tried hard to understand just how this could help matters, but, unfortunately, I moved away before I had arrived at the solution of the question. Here, one finds practically no temperance sentiment, and as a result liquor holds undisputed sway. The license fee for retail liquor dealers is not uniform, each county and municipality regulating the matter according to its tastes. I have been informed that this county, (San Joaquin) charges no license fee, and I suppose my information is correct, judging from the number of saloons one sees on every hand. Why, even little Lathrop with a population of less than 400 souls has four saloons. Yes, I know they are front doors to hell, but it seems the people want them, and so they are here. Well, I am here too, and by the Lord's help I mean to do what I can to develop public sentiment against the wrong, and favorable to the right. It will, however, be anything but an easy task to make headway against the high places in sin, on account of the indifference of the people. Many have become so accustomed to the presence of wrong, that they fail, in a measure, to realize how much society is menaced. Others are concerned in the grape industry, so that like Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen, they don't want to hear anything about temperance because that by the wine industry they get much gain and, gain you know, especially *much* gain is a telling argument to not a few people in this world. The hope for better things to come is much strengthened by the presence and activity of the W. C. T. U. which keeps on pounding away "For God, for home and Native Land." The temperance millennium may be a long time in coming, but its better day will at last dawn upon the land, and its beneficent will pervade all things. As a class, the churches of California are of course opposed to liquor, and discountenance tippling. But so many have no connection with, nor respect for the church, and drinkers, moderate and immoderate, are greatly in the majority. There are, perhaps, comparatively few "old toppers," but I should not wonder if their number grew greatly as time goes on, seeing that conditions are so favorable for such an outcome.

Only show me a country where saloons are so plentifully supported, and in which the temperance sentiment is not even strong enough to impose any decided restrictions upon the liquor traffic, and I give you a tolerably correct estimate of its general moral atmosphere. Under such

conditions I should expect to find no general observance of the Sabbath, dancing, and similar pleasures the common form of amusement, a lax estimate of the marriage tie, prostitution common, bold and defended, and crimes of the various types, by no means rare. I should expect to find many tramps, with prospects that many more would follow in their worthless calling. To a very considerable extent, such an estimate would fit California, for there are no Sunday laws, so that business, except where business men agree to the contrary, goes on uninterruptedly on God's holy day. In many of the cities merchants close their places of business, but in the smaller country towns such a proceeding is much more rare. Many of the business people would be glad to close, and not a few have signed a petition asking the State Legislature to enact a Sunday closing law. While they would be quite willing to honor the day, the refusal of their competitors balks them, for they will not do so alone, because they fear their trade will suffer. I have yet to hear of a single place where saloons close on Sunday; it is too often a gala day for them, and I suppose their keepers could hardly be persuaded to give up the trade (?) which comes to them then. Except in the busy seasons, I do not think that the ranchmen go on as usual on Sunday; but to many it is the day for picking up the odds and ends which have been neglected during the week. Horses are to be shod, harness to be repaired, a stock of supplies laid in, and everything gotten ready for a fresh start on Monday morning. Yet others spend the day in hunting or other sports. As to amusements, sure enough, dancing and card parties lead all others, and furnish their full contingent of physical and moral wrecks for this and succeeding generations. These amusements are to be found in all their stages of degeneracy. Dances, private, public, clean or lewd. Cards, in parlor and bar room, where gambling goes on openly, with no effort to hide its ugly self. Marriage too, is I think, considered by many as a much less sacred institution than is common in rural districts in the east. By the law it is held to be purely a civil contract, and may be entered into by either the usual way or by a contract legally drawn and signed by the interested parties without any ceremony whatever. Unfaithfulness is not at all uncommon, and many divorces result. Prostitution is a firmly established institution, and is openly defended by many seemingly wise people. In many of our cities it has settled itself in the very heart of the business centers, and will not be dislodged, because it is evidently wanted there. It would flaunt its dirty banner